

# Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

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*A message from  
Congressman Elijah E. Cummings*



*It is both a privilege and honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue outreach efforts to further inform you of legislative action in Congress. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.*

*Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress*

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## Congressman Cummings Secures \$1.5 Million in Federal Funding for Heat Relief

As a result of at least five heat-related deaths in Maryland this year and more than nine consecutive days of 90-plus-degree weather, Congressman Cummings announced that the state's U.S. Congressional delegation has secured \$1,579,579 in federal funds for heat relief.

At least 20,000 households in the Baltimore area will be eligible to apply for these grants which will help low-income families purchase air conditioners or fans.

Medical experts note that because Maryland does not traditionally have long-term heat-waves, those who have weaker immune systems often suffer when the temperatures suddenly rise.

"The well-being of growing children, grandparents or those with disabilities should not be jeopardized because of extreme weather conditions," Congressman Cummings said. "These grants will provide the appropriate resources they need to stay healthy."

The funds come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which administers the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Programs (LIHEAP).

Elsie Walker, Director of Maryland's Office of Home Energy Programs said, "We really appreciate Congressman Cummings for his diligence in helping us obtain these funds."

For more information on how to apply for these funds, please contact 410-396-5555 in Baltimore City and 410-853-3385 in Baltimore County.

## Head Start Receives \$188,452

In addition to a \$27 million federal grant recently secured for Baltimore's Head Start programs, Congressman Cummings announced another \$188,000 for the comprehensive child development program that prepares children of low-income families for school. The grant was awarded to the YMCA of Central Maryland, which administers the program to more than 500 preschoolers.

"All children deserve an excellent education," Congressman Cummings said.

He continued, "I am proud that my consistent urging in Washington has opened the doors to Head Start for thousands of preschool children."

## Grant to Study Heart Disease Risk Factors in African Americans

Subsequent to his determined efforts to reduce healthcare disparities suffered by minority patients, Congressman Cummings successfully secured \$501,972 for Johns Hopkins University to study methods to reduce heart disease among African American families.

In a recent report entitled *Unequal Healthcare*, it was determined that African Americans, who often have higher rates of heart disease, overwhelmingly receive inferior healthcare when being treated for the condition.

"This grant will lead the way to reducing heart disease rates in the African American community and also help to eliminate healthcare disparities," Congressman Cummings said.

## **Congressional Authority to Declare War**

In recent weeks, President Bush has expressed a strong desire to declare war on the nation of Iraq, without Congressional consideration.

Congressman Cummings, however, strongly disagreed with this plan and asserted that the U.S. Constitution gives Congress, not the President the authority to decide whether the United States should attack another nation. The only exception is when America has been attacked or an attack is imminent.

"I believe that such a unilateral action by the President would be both unconstitutional and unwise," Congressman Cummings said. "If the American people are to sacrifice their sons and daughters in war, Congress must first fulfill its constitutional duty."

Further, the "War Powers Resolution," enacted in 1973 remains the law of the land, Congressman Cummings noted. This law recognizes the President's authority to use American military force in a national emergency, but it also requires the President to consult with Congress in every possible instance.

However, several Members of Congress, mostly Republicans, have asserted that the "Use of Force" resolution which was passed shortly after Sept. 11, 2001 exempts the President from both the Constitutional provision and the "War Powers Resolution," Congressman Cummings observed.

Under the "Use of Force" resolution, which Congressman Cummings approved, the President was given congressional authorization to use appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized or committed the attacks of Sept. 11. Congressman Cummings noted that this resolution did not give the President authority to use American military force against nations – including Saddam Hussein's Iraq – whose connections with the September 11 attacks have yet to be established.

"Therefore, the President is obligated by our Constitution and laws to make his case for war to the people of this country through Congress," Congressman Cummings said.

In this regard, Congressman Cummings commended the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for holding hearings on our options with respect to Iraq.

"The process of thoughtful congressional deliberation must continue. The American people deserve answers to their questions about a possible war with Iraq," Congressman Cummings said.

## **Report Finds the Nation's Poorest Schools Receive the Least Amount of Public Funding**

Congressman Cummings expressed concern, but was not surprised, following the release of a national report which found that the nation's poorest schools receive the least amount of state and local funds. The Education Trust, which is a nonpartisan group that represents schools in poor urban districts, released this report entitled "The Funding Gap" in early August.

"This should serve as wake up call to the nation's leaders and those who advocate cuts in education funding. All schools, unfortunately, are not equal and 'The Funding Gap' report acknowledges this fact," Congressman Cummings said.

Educational inequalities have been apparent during many of Congressman Cummings' school visits. For example, some schools have just a few computers for several hundred students. In other instances, Congressman Cummings observed that some students learn from outdated history books.

"I am disappointed, but not surprised, that there is such a wide spending gap between rich and poor school districts on a national level. The release of this report establishes that educational disparities are a national concern that must be addressed on the federal level," Congressman Cummings said.

The findings in the report are not new to many Maryland residents, noted Congressman Cummings. Recently, the state's Thornton Commission issued a report that found Maryland's public school education is underfunded by \$1.1 billion, per year. Within this deficit, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) was underfunded by \$274 million per year.

In the national report, it was noted that Maryland's disparity gap was \$912 in the year 2000. This means higher-income school districts annually receive \$912 more in public funds, per child, compared to schools located in lower-income neighborhoods. Maryland fared better than several other states, some of which showed disparity gaps as high as \$2000.

"Part of the reason for Maryland's narrower gap is due to the efforts of state leaders who have put high priority on children's education," Congressman Cummings said. "I would like to applaud Governor Parris Glendening, Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and Maryland's General Assembly for the passage of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act -- a move that will increase statewide education funding over the next five years."

But Congressman Cummings emphasized that the issue should not be ignored until the gap is completely closed.

On a federal level, Congressman Cummings voted for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as the Leave No Child Behind Act) which was signed into law in January. The legislation establishes a 12-year target for closing achievement gaps between affluent and low-income students as well as minority and non-minority students. The bill increased Title I funding by \$41 million for the poorest schools. In Baltimore, this represents a 25% increase.

When the House of Representatives reconvenes on September 4, Congressman Cummings will fight for increasing federal funding dedicated to closing the gap and oppose any efforts to cut educational funding for the area's public schools.

"The 'Bridge to Excellence' in public schools should also be expanded to the entire nation," Congressman Cummings said. "An educated public benefits all Americans."